

## **“No Place Like Home” Initiative**

### ***Bipartisan Senate Initiative to Prevent and Address Homelessness in our Local Communities***

The Senate proposal on homelessness re-purposes bond money from Proposition 63, the Mental Health Services Act, and creatively leverages billions of additional dollars from other local, state, and federal agencies to achieve the following goals:

- A \$2 billion bond to construct permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless persons with mental illness.
- \$200 million, over 4 years, to provide supportive housing in the shorter-term, rent subsidies, while the permanent housing is constructed or rehabilitated. This will help tens of thousands of people afford a place to live.
- Support for two special housing programs that will assist families:

*The “Bringing Families Home” pilot project, a county matching grant program to reduce homelessness among families that are part of the child welfare system.*

*The CalWORKs Housing Support Program, which provides housing and support services for CalWORKs families in danger of homelessness.*

### **Preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place**

- The State will additionally work to stop homelessness before it starts by targeting an increase in Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP) grants to 1.3 million Californians who are considered at risk of becoming homeless. These grants provide income support for the aged, blind, and disabled poor who cannot work.

*Rates of homelessness are higher for persons with disabilities who cannot work; SSI/SSP is intended to help them make ends meet, and a large portion of grants usually goes toward rent.*

- There will be one-time investment to incentivize local governments to boost outreach efforts and advocacy to get more eligible poor people enrolled in the SSI/SSP program.

*The federal government covers 72% of the total costs of the SSI/SSP program, so state and local benefits are multiplied significantly for each newly eligible recipient.*

## **Background**

Homelessness is not just a big city issue, and it does not just affect the people who are enduring it themselves. It also matters to small business and impacts all of us in our quality of life. With more than 100,000 people living on the streets, it is a clear symptom of serious problems within our society.

And the problems driven by homelessness are becoming more costly and prevalent.

In response, a bipartisan coalition of members from the California State Senate introduced a solution that aims at the actual illness: not the symptoms. This first-of-its kind “No Place like Home” initiative will assist local communities in preventing and addressing homelessness.

**California has 22-percent of America’s homeless population. California also has more than one third of the nation’s chronically homeless, and an even higher percentage among homeless women. We also have the largest number of veterans experiencing homelessness, making up 24-percent of the national homeless veteran population. Many veterans are considered at risk of homelessness due to poverty, mental illness, lack of support networks, and dismal living conditions in overcrowded or substandard housing.**

Of the 29,178 chronically homeless in California, nearly 85 percent are unsheltered. Serving these individuals can often cost the public more than \$100,000 per person each year. It costs more *not to deal with this problem* than to deal with it.

While housing and mental health services are governed by local governments, it’s clear that the problem is too expansive for the state to stand by the sidelines.

The State Legislature will directly focus on providing assistance to better manage existing resources and assist local governments through incentives for creating and maintaining permanent housing essential to reducing homelessness.

The Senate proposal supports a “housing first” strategy – an approach that has been proven successful in other states.

We’ve seen it work wherever it has been tried, and homelessness experts agree: when you provide safe, secure housing to the homeless, it becomes easier to reach them to provide all of the other services they need.

Mental illness is bad enough without compounding it with homelessness. The longer many people remain homeless, the worse their mental illnesses get and the harder it is to reach them.

By getting people off the streets, we can revitalize neighborhoods and disrupt the ecosystem that leads to homelessness.

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